

The Federal Diary

THE WASHINGTON POST Wednesday, Feb. 12, 1975 C17

Test Near for Fringe Benefit Bill



By
**Mike
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President Ford's austerity program for the bureaucracy may be nearing its first up-or-down vote test in Congress.

The issue isn't his plan to clamp a 5 per cent lid on government and military pay, or freeze retiree pensions through mid-1976.

Instead, the first government employee fringe benefit to clear a Senate-House hurdle this year is expected to be legislation that would raise expense allowances and mileage payments for government workers who travel to drive their own cars, for Under Sam.

The bill is almost identical to legislation that cleared the Senate and House easily last year, and into a surprise veto by the President. It would raise the per diem maximum from \$25 to \$35, and in the present 12-cent per mile allowance to a minimum of 5 cents and a maximum

Mr. Ford surprised government officials, congressional aides and federal union leaders when in the last session of Congress he vetoed the legislation. Although it would affect thousands of government travelers (and many private firms who base their payments on government rates) the dollar impact is relatively small.

The President killed the bill last year because Senate-House conferees at the 11th hour tacked on a rider that would have given veterans the same travel allowance as government workers. The Veterans Administration now reimburses certain veterans 6 to 8 cents per mile for driving to and from treatment centers. Mr. Ford said that wasn't part of the deal, and vetoed the entire measure.

This time, both the Senate and House Government Operations Committees have carefully avoided any mention of veterans in their legislation, and they have unofficial word from the White House that Mr. Ford will sign the bill. Veterans committees, meanwhile, have promised to take up the mileage payments for veterans, but in a separate bill. House Committee Chairman Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Tex.) has asked the leadership to put the

per diem-mileage bill on the suspension calendar for next Tuesday. That means it could come up for a vote anytime on Feb. 18, if the House is back from its Washington's birthday recess.

A congressional staff member said the per diem-mileage allowance bill "really isn't a good barometer" to measure President Ford's announced hard line on federal spending. "We understand the administration backs this bill, and that the only reason he (the President) vetoed it before was because of the veterans thing."

"If the President signs it this time, that doesn't mean he is going to soft-peddle his austerity program for government workers. On the other hand, if he should veto it again, with all the objectionable language out of the bill, I would say government employee legislation is in for a very hard time."

So watch the Capitol Hill vote, and especially whether President Ford follows up with a yes or a no.

Retirees Sound Off: Rep. Herbert Harris (D-Va.) meets this week with representatives of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees and other interested ex-gov-

ernment workers from his district. The coffee session is scheduled for the George Mason Public Library in Annandale.

Harris estimates that 40 per cent of the voters in his district either work for the government, are in the military or have retired from the civil or uniformed service. He's been assigned the second-ranking spot (after Rep. Dominick V. Daniels, N.J.) on the retirement and employee benefits subcommittee.

Purpose of the meeting today is to find out what problems government-military retirees have, and what legislative solutions are possible. President Ford has proposed freezing government pensions through July 1976, and that will be the major topic on the agenda.

Plastic Keys: Commerce Department workers at headquarters have been issued plastic cards that will permit them to open seven electronically locked doors during work hours. Commerce locked the doors as part of the government-wide security program here to discourage bomb plantings. Commerce officials say that main doors around the building are equipped with "panic bars" that can be pushed open quickly during fire or other emergencies.

C18 Wednesday, Feb. 12, 1975 THE WASHINGTON POST.

THE DISTRICT LINE..... By Bill Gold



**'Twas the
Night
Before
Christmas**

Bill Gold

Our story begins on Christmas eve. Robert L. Hess and his wife and three children were asleep, and visions of more than sugarplums danced in their heads. On Christmas Day, they were all flying out to California to help Bob's parents celebrate their golden wedding anniversary.

The next morning, the sugarplums danced right out of their heads. They awoke to discover that their house had been burglarized during the night, and among the items that were missing were cash, credit cards—and \$1,475 worth of round trip airline tickets to California.

The Vienna, Va., police were called, responded at once, and were most helpful. Among other things, they suggested that the airline be alerted.

So Mrs. Hess called the friendly skies of United and told a clerk there what had happened. "You no doubt have a record of our five confirmed reservations for this afternoon," she said. "Will we have any

stunned her: "If you don't have tickets, you can't board."

"Well—what are we supposed to do? Do you watch that flight to see who tries to use our tickets, or do you alert your ticket counter not to cash in our tickets, or what?"

"Lady," was the response, "airline tickets are valuable and negotiable instruments. If you lose them, it's like losing cash. Sorry you've had this problem but we can't do anything about it." And that was it.

Merry Christmas to you, too.

The Vienna police called the Dulles police and obtained an immediate promise that the flight would be watched to see who boarded. Then the Vienna policemen busied themselves with a search for clues, and the Hess family was left to stew about their loss, and about missing the big golden wedding celebration in California.

Later that day, about two hours before flight time, neighborhood children found Mrs. Hess' purse in a storm sewer. The cash was gone, but everything else—including the airplane tickets—was intact. So they made the trip after all.

But when they returned to Washington, Hess told me about the incident. Released 2002/01/10 : CIA-RDP77M00144R000800080015-3 I was aware that losing an airline ticket is like losing cash. I said that was news to me, be-

It ought to be a lot easier to put a "stop" on cashing in a stolen ticket than to stop payment on a lost check.

Anyhow, I called a United official and told him the story. "I can't believe it," he said. "Let me check into the situation and call you back."

When he called back, he was very subdued. "The basic facts are as you outlined them," he said. "I still can't believe that a United employee could have handled the matter that badly. Our people are instructed to turn over 'lost ticket' calls to a supervisor who explains that the passenger can buy a new ticket and put in a refund claim for the missing ticket—and does it with tact and understanding. Maybe because this happened on Christmas Day Mrs. Hess had the bad luck to talk to a temporary employee. In any event, I can only apologize for that part of it.

"But as to the risk one runs in losing an airline ticket," he went on, "that's for real. You can use your ticket on some other airline, or cash it in at any number of ticket counters—it's good for a year, you know—and there's just no way we can protect the passenger in cases of this kind. The state of the art just doesn't permit it at present."

"Oh, hogwash," I said. "Now that everybody is computerized, the state of the art permits you

airline can guarantee a refund on a lost ticket. You can file a refund claim, and the airline then waits several months to see whether the ticket turns up. If it has been used or cashed in, you're just out of luck. If it has not, you get a refund."

During the three weeks that followed that conversation, I have talked to a score of people—in United, in other airlines, at the Civil Aeronautics Board, at the Air Transport Association and at the Aviation Consumer Action Project. The airlines and the ATA told the same story. The CAB was helpful and sympathetic but explained that its regulatory power was limited. Each airline files its own "tariff," which spells out not only its fares but procedures relating to things like refund requests. The CAB can merely oversee compliance with tariffs; it cannot tell the airline what to say in its tariff.

Only at the Aviation Consumer Action Project, a Ralph Nader group, was I encouraged to think that there is need for remedial legislation and hope that Congress will someday provide it.

ACAP's Reuben Roberts III told me that although airlines have had the ability program code numbers for their computer for years, it has elected to use the idiosyncrasy for regional testing.

Program for Wednesday: Senate met at 11 a.m. and adjourned at 5:46 p.m. until noon on Wednesday, January 29, when, after a period for the transaction of routine morning business for not to exceed 30 minutes, it will resume consideration of S. 281, railroad reorganization (4 hour time limitation).

Pages S1026, S1132

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION

Committee on Aeronautical and Space Science: Committee held an organizational meeting where it adopted rules governing committee procedures for the 94th Congress, and ordered favorably reported an original resolution requesting \$57,000 for committee expenses for this session of the Congress.

SUBCOMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs: Committee held an organizational meeting where subcommittee appointments were made as follows:

Subcommittee on Housing: Senators Sparkman (chairman), Proxmire, Williams, McIntyre, Cranston, Biden, Brooke, Tower, Packwood, and Garn;

Subcommittee on Financial Institutions: Senators McIntyre (chairman), Proxmire, Sparkman, Williams, Stevenson, Tower, Brooke, and Helms;

Subcommittee on Securities: Senators Williams (chairman), McIntyre, Cranston, Stevenson, Morgan, Brooke, Tower, and Helms;

Subcommittee on International Finance: Senators Stevenson (chairman), Proxmire, Williams, Cranston, Biden, McIntyre, Packwood, Tower, Helms, and Brooke;

Subcommittee on Production and Stabilization: Senators Cranston (chairman), Stevenson, Biden, Helms, and Packwood;

Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs: Senators Biden (chairman), Proxmire, Morgan, Garn, and Brooke;

Subcommittee on Small Business: Senators Morgan (chairman), Sparkman, McIntyre, Garn, and Packwood.

Committee will meet again tomorrow on other organizational matters.

COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION

Committee on the Budget: Committee held an organizational meeting where it adopted rules governing committee procedures for the 94th Congress, and discussed committee activities, for the first session, but made no announcements and recessed subject to call.

COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION AND ACTIVITIES

Committee on Finance: Committee held an executive organizational meeting where it adopted rules govern-

ing committee procedures for the 94th Congress, and ordered favorably reported the following original resolutions:

(a) Requesting \$30,000 for committee expenses for this session of the Congress;

(b) To continue authority of committee to employ four temporary employees; and

(c) Requesting authority to hire subcommittee staff.

Also, committee announced plans to undertake a study of the supplemental security income program, a federally administered income maintenance program for the aged, blind, and disabled.

COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION

Committee on Government Operations: Committee held its organizational meeting where it adopted rules governing committee procedures for the 94th Congress, and ordered favorably reported the following business items:

S. 172, providing an increase in amounts of reimbursable official travel expenses in Federal employees (including an increase from \$25 per day to \$35 per day in basic per diem);

An original resolution requesting \$375,000 each, for Committees on Commerce and Government Operations to conduct a joint study of current effectiveness of operations of certain Federal and State regulatory agencies; and

An original resolution requesting \$2,406,362 for committee and subcommittee activities as follows:

Full Committee—\$239,200;

Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations—\$1,113,000;

Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations—\$388,544;

Subcommittee on Reports, Accounting, and Management—\$258,618;

Subcommittee on Federal Spending Practices, Efficiency and Open Government—\$292,000; and

Subcommittee on Oversight Procedures—\$115,000.

NOMINATION

Committee on the Judiciary: Committee continued hearings on the nomination of Edward Hirsch Levi, of Illinois, to be Attorney General, receiving testimony from the nominee.

Hearings continue tomorrow with public witnesses.

COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION

Committee on Labor and Public Welfare: Committee held an executive organizational meeting where it adopted rules governing committee procedures for the 94th Congress, and ordered favorably reported S. 66, extending and revising nurses training assistance programs; health revenue sharing; and health service programs for fiscal years 1975-77; and an original reso-

lution (S. Res. 40) requesting \$1,850,000 for committee expenses for this session of the Congress.

Also, subcommittee appointments were made as follows:

Subcommittee on Labor—Senators Williams (chairman), Randolph, Pell, Nelson, Eagleton, Hathaway, Mondale, Javits, Schweiker, Taft, and Stafford;

Subcommittee on Handicapped—Senators Randolph (chairman), Cranston, Williams, Pell, Kennedy, Mondale, Hathaway, Stafford, Taft, Schweiker, and Beall;

Subcommittee on Education—Senators Pell (chairman), Randolph, Williams, Kennedy, Mondale, Eagleton, Cranston, Hathaway, Beall, Javits, Schweiker, Stafford, and Taft;

Subcommittee on Health—Senators Kennedy (chairman), Williams, Nelson, Eagleton, Cranston, Pell, Mondale, Hathaway, Schweiker, Javits, Beall, Taft, and Stafford;

Subcommittee on Employment, Poverty, and Migratory Labor—Senators Nelson (chairman), Kennedy, Mondale, Cranston, Randolph, Hathaway, Williams, Taft, Javits, Schweiker, and Beall;

Subcommittee on Children and Youth—Senators Mondale (chairman), Williams, Randolph, Kennedy, Nelson, Cranston, Hathaway, Stafford, Taft, Beall, and Laxalt;

Subcommittee on Aging—Senators Eagleton (chairman), Cranston, Kennedy, Randolph, Williams, Pell, Nelson, Beall, Schweiker, Taft, and Stafford;

Subcommittee on Alcoholism and Narcotics—Senators Hathaway (chairman), Randolph, Williams, Kennedy, Mondale, Cranston, Nelson, Schweiker, Javits, Beall, and Laxalt;

Special Subcommittees

Subcommittee on Arts and Humanities—Senators Pell (chairman), Nelson, Eagleton, Mondale, Williams (ex officio), Javits, Taft, and Stafford;

Subcommittee on National Science Foundation—Senators Kennedy (chairman), Pell, Eagleton, Cranston, Mondale, Williams (ex officio), Laxalt, Stafford, and Schweiker;

Subcommittee on Human Resources—Senators Cranston (chairman), Randolph, Nelson, Williams (ex officio), Beall, Stafford, and Taft.

FDA AND INTRAUTERINE DEVICES

Committee on Labor and Public Welfare: Subcommittee on Health began joint hearings with Judiciary Subcommittee on Administrative Practice and Procedure, to review guidelines of the Food and Drug Administration, Department of HEW, regarding use of an intrauterine device known as a Dalkon Shield. Testimony was received from FDA Commissioner, Alexander M. Schmidt; the FDA Advisory Committee composed of Sheldon J. Segal; Dr. Charles McDowell; Dr. Emmanuel Friedman; and Dr. Richard P. Dickey; and numerous other FDA employees.

Hearings continue tomorrow.

COMMITTEE ORGANIZATION

Committee on Veterans' Affairs: Committee held an organizational meeting where it adopted rules governing committee procedures for the 94th Congress, agreed to an agenda of committee activities and announced subcommittee appointments, as follows:

Subcommittee on Compensation and Pensions: Senators Talmadge (chairman), Randolph, Stone, Hansen, and Thurmond;

Subcommittee on Health and Hospitals: Senators Cranston (chairman), Randolph, Stone, Thurmond, and Hansen;

Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance: Senators Stone (chairman), Talmadge, Cranston, Scott of Virginia, and Stafford;

Subcommittee on Readjustment, Education, and Employment: Senators Hartke (chairman), Talmadge, Cranston, Stafford, and Scott of Virginia.

DRUG INDUSTRY COMPETITION

Select Committee on Small Business: Subcommittee on Monopoly held hearings on competitive problems in the drug industry, receiving testimony today on clindamycin and lincomycin—two antibiotic drugs—from Dr. Francis J. Tedesco, Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis; Dr. Stuart H. Danovitch, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.; Dr. Morton Schwartz, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston; Dr. Gerald Mandell, University of Virginia Medical School, Charlottesville; and Dr. Donald Kaye, Medical College of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

Hearings continue tomorrow.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Bills Introduced: 112 public bills, H.R. 2166-2277; 9 private bills, H.R. 2278-2286; and 18 resolutions, H.J. Res. 145-152, H. Con. Res. 69 and 70, and H. Res. 101-108 were introduced.

Pages H321-H322, H342-H346

Minority Committee Elections: Agreed to H. Res. 101, electing minority members to certain standing committees of the House.

Pages H321-H322

Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation: Read a letter from the chairman of the Committee on